

Message Text

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SUBJECT: UNIONS CALL GENERAL STRIKE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. FOLLOWING LENGTHY DEBATE ENCOMPASSING AMPLE DISSENT, TRADE UNIONS HAVE CALLED FOR FOUR-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE ON FEBRUARY 27. AT THE SAME TIME UNIONS HOPE TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE WITH RUMOR GOVERNMENT AND HAVE ASKED FOR FAVORABLE ACTION ON SEVERAL PROPOSALS. STRIKE PER SE SHOULD NOT CRIPPLE ECONOMY NOR JEOPARDIZE RUMOR GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. CONCLUDING A TENSE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SESSION THE FEDERATION CGIL, DISL, UIL CALLED A FOUR-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE FOR FEBRUARY 27. IN ORDER TO MASK DISSENT AND MAINTAIN UNITARY APPEARANCE THE THREE SECRETARIES GENERAL VOTED IN THE NAME OF THEIR RESPECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS. THE DECISION REPRESENTS A COMPROMISE BETWEEN AN INDUSTRIAL UNION PUSH FOR AN EIGHT-HOUR STRIKE FEBRUARY 20 AND THE VIEWS OF A SUBSTANTIAL MINORITY OF CISL AND UIL WHO OPPOSE USE OF GENERAL STRIKE WEAPON IN CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CLIMATE.

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3. UNIONS DO NOT CONSIDER STRIKE TO BE AGAINST RUMOR GOVERNMENT AS

SUCH BUT INTEND IT TO BE DEMONSTRATION THAT WORKERS ARE NOT PREPARED TO QUIETLY BEAR FULL BURDEN OF CURRENT INFLATION. DOOR TO FURTHER DIALOGUE WITH GOVERNMENT REMAINS OPEN WITH UNIONS HOPEFUL THAT STRIKE THREAT WILL PROD GOVERNMENT INTO FAVORABLE ACTION ON SOME OF UNION PRIORITIES. THESE INCLUDE A MORE FAR-REACHING PRICE CONTROL POLICY THAN THAT RECENTLY PROPOSED (ROME 2042), GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN COMPANY LEVEL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NOW UNDER WAY IN WHICH LARGE ENTERPRISES RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS UNION DEMANDS FOR MASSIVE INVESTMENT PROGRAMS IN SOUTH, IMMEDIATE APPROVAL OF PENSION BILL AND LINK OF PENSIONS TO WAGE DYNAMICS, AND WIDE-RANGING WAGE AND JOB GUARANTEES FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY ECONOMIC CYCLE OR STRUCTURAL DIFFICULTIES.

4. ANOTHER UNION/GOVERNMENT MEETING MAY TAKE PLACE BEFORE STRIKE BUT IT NOW UNLIKELY THAT STRIKE WILL BE CALLED OFF. IT HAS ASSUMED SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE AS EVIDENCE UNION INITIATIVE TO MEET CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. CISL SECRETARIAT MEMBER DESCRIBED STRIKE TO EMBASSY AS NECESSARY MEDICINE WHICH NOT EXPECTED TO DO MUCH GOOD - BUT NOT MUCH HARM EITHER.

5. LACK OF UNANIMITY ON WISDOM GENERAL STRIKE AND RECENT EXPERIENCE IN AGITATION FOR LOCAL CONTRACTS INDICATES THAT STRIKE WHICH COULD POTENTIALLY AFFECT 13 MILLION WORKERS WILL BE LESS THAN TOTAL. ALTHOUGH INDUSTRIAL WORKER PARTICIPATION EXPECTED TO BE HIGH, STRIKE MAY BE LESS EFFECTIVE IN TRANSPORT AND SERVICE SECTORS.

6. ALTHOUGH SOME RECALL THAT IN JULY 1970 RUMOR ABRUPTLY RESIGNED PRIME MINISTERSHIP WHEN CONFRONTED BY GENERAL STRIKE, CENTER LEFT POLITICIANS DO NOT ASSESS PRESENT STRIKE-CALL DELIBERATE CHALLENGE EITHER TO GOVERNMENT OR PRIME MINISTER RUMOR. RATHER, GOVERNMENT LEADERS APPEAR TO HAVE RESIGNED THEMSELVES IN RECENT WEEK TO PUTTING UP WITH SOME LIMITED GENERAL STRIKE ACTION, RECOGNIZING THAT UNIONS FEEL THEY MUST MAKE SOME SHOW TO RANK AND FILE AS AUSTERITY SHOE BEGINS TO PINCH. BEST GUESS HERE IS THAT, HAVING PAPERED-OVER MAJOR POLICY DIFFICULTIES AT FEBRUARY 5-6 SUMMIT (ROME 1848) IT NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT GOVERNMENT WILL BE JEOPARDIZED BY THIS LONG-ANTICIPATED STRIKE OF LIMITED DURATION AND VERY POSSIBLY OF LIMITED EFFECTIVENESS.

7. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT CONCENTRATION ON STRIKE ISSUE ENABLED LABOR FEDERATION TO AVOID DELICATE LABLR UNITY ISSUE WHICH WAS TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE THEME OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. A VAGUE ADDRESS BY CISL SEC GEN STORTI OBSCURING THE DEFINITION OF UNITY AND CALLING FOR UNITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN ACCORD WITH REALITIES WAS APPROVED WITHOUT OPPOSITION. THUS, UNIONS HAVE YET TO GRAPPLE WITH UNITY ISSUE AND IN PARTICULAR THE STATUS OF FACTORY LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS. WITH DISUNITY SURFACING ON THE STRIKE FRONT, EARLY RESOLUTION OF THE UNITY QUESTION IS UNLIKELY. VOLPE

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